DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 233 712 IR 020 006

AUTHOR McCarty, Henry R.
TITLE Teleconferencing - A Cost-Effective Communications Service.
INSTITUTION San Diego County Dept. of Education, Calif.
PUB DATE Nov 81
NOTE 7p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Consultation Programs; *Cost Effectiveness; Elementary Secondary Education; Essays; Inservice Education; Organizational Effectiveness; *Teleconferencing; Telephone Communications Systems; Television
IDENTIFIERS California (San Diego County); PF Project

ABSTRACT

Teleconferencing is an effective and cost-efficient means of providing the staff of the school district access to consultants and inservice programs. Teleconferencing differs from televised programs in that it is interactive, allowing participants in a conference or program to be in different places, yet still communicate. Experience at the San Diego County teleconferencing network has shown this to be a viable alternative to traveling great distances to a central location. With teleconferencing, there is no valid excuse for a staff member to miss an important presentation. The four levels of teleconferencing are: (1) telephone-to-telephone conferencing; (2) televised transmission with telephone feedback to the studio; (3) televised transmission with telephone linkages to all the participating sites; and (4) two-way video conferences. In order for teleconferencing to work and be cost-effective, good management principles must be observed, including assigning a person at each site to prepare and conduct sessions and to serve as liaison. (DC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

✓ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Henry R. McCarty

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED233712

TELECONFERENCING - A COST-EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS SERVICE

by

Henry R. McCarty

San Diego County Department of Education

IR020006

TELECONFERENCING - A COST-EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS SERVICE

by

Henry R. McCarty, San Diego County Department of Education

"Time is money" is an old American adage which is being voiced more frequently today in education. Until recently it has been relatively easy and inexpensive for school districts' staff members to drive to the San Diego County Department of Education to meet with Department consultants and specialists and to participate in inservice education programs. Recent studies of the cost of operating an automobile in the area indicated the cost has soared beyond 27¢ per mile and there are predictions that these costs will continue to increase.

It is obvious that escalating transportation costs and employee costs will severely limit the number of staff persons able or willing to drive to the Department of Education to take advantage of the many inservice education opportunities offered by the Department. In this context local school districts face the loss of professional inservice training for teachers, administrators and classified personnel. In an era where accountability and competency are bywords, few would dispute the need for continuing professional inservice nor would many contest the need for communication among staff members both within a given district and between school districts.

Combining the advantages of television and telephone communication with recent advances in electronic technology, we have a new inservice training option - teleconferencing. Teleconferencing is a cost-efficient communication system which can serve as an answer to provide some of the services needed to education. Teleconferencing is applying existing county television studios, existing microwave transmission system and the commercial telephone system to provide inservice programs on education issues, new programs, outstanding consultants and new ideas to county educators. Specifically, staff members

in their own schools and offices may receive live and videotaped television presentations with telephone feedback to make programs interactive.

Teleconferencing is an efficient, energy and money-saving plan for both the school districts and the San Diego County Office to serve the individual consultant. The cost remains the same whether the presentation is delivered in person or by teleconferencing. The service encourages staff members to watch and learn about new programs and concepts reducing travel and time cost. Too, teleconferencing eliminates the many reasons now given for lack of staff participation in inservice programs. For example, administrators find that the specialists they have hired, or the presentations that they have designed, usually play to a half-empty audience but now there is a vehicle that can be used to reach everyone in this target audience. Teleconference programs can be taped and shown to staff at a school or school district at the most convenient times. This scheduling flexibility offers no valid excuse for a staff member to miss an important inservice presentation. A videotape program can be replayed at any time, before school, at the lunch hour or any time in the afternoon.

A San Diego County teleconferencing network with four area centers equipped with communications receiving capability and multichannel telephone feedback equipment to the central television studio has been established. This makes it possible for principals, teachers and administrative staff to meet at the area centers or at some 412 schools that are equipped with television reception to participate in the regular scheduled teleconferencing activities.

A recent teleconference in San Diego County using three area centers on the subject of "Managing Your Teacher Evaluation System" had over 25 participants

in three teleconferences with over 85% indicating that the method of presenting the program was interesting and effective. The participants also suggested that the length of a teleconference should be held to two hours.

There are four levels of teleconferencing from the simple to the complex:

Level I: Telephone to telephone conferencing with three or more participants.

Level II: Television-telephone feedback which involves television transmission and telephone calls into the television studio to discuss with the consultant questions about the presentation and to extend the information.

Level III: Level III is telephone-television conferences with open telephone connections at two or more sites where all of the participants at the specific sites may respond to questions and answers from the participants.

Level IV: Television teleconference with two-way video conference by satellite or microwave.

Today the three telecommunications elements of teleconferences are telephone, television and the computer. The efficiency and the ease of conducting teleconferencing will increase while the costs of these methods will decrease as wider and more extensive use is made of these systems. Teleconferencing is available to school districts in San Diego County 18 hours a day, seven days a week. While such coverage may seem excessive, it offers individual school districts unlimited time to deliver messages to staff, parent groups, volunteers and to other community groups.

For teleconferencing to be cost effective, good management principles must be observed. Participating districts are asked to assign a responsible person

at each school site to serve as liaison with the San Diego County office and the staff that is presenting the teleconference. The representative at the school site will be responsible for preparing the sessions, readying the facilities, chairing the meetings and conducting the sessions in a professional and timely manner. As the San Diego County Department of Education extends and uses the teleconferencing capability, we feel that convenience is a strong motivation to explore and extend this new group interaction to more school personnel.

The participants -- even though they may be thousands of miles apart -- are provided with the opportunity by teleconferencing to be in two places simultaneously.

For more information contact:

Henry R. McCarty, Director
Instructional Television Services
San Diego County Office of Education
6401 Linda Vista Road
San Diego CA 92111
Telephone No.: (619) 292-3552

November 11, 1981

TELECONFERENCING

Teleconferencing is different from a televised lecture or program. A teleconference becomes an individual conversation between the participants -- even though they may be thousands of miles apart. Teleconferencing provides the opportunity for the participants to be in two places simultaneously.

We have classified teleconference techniques into four levels:

LEVEL I	Telephone teleconference - 3 or more telephone connections using Centrex
LEVEL II	Television - telephone feedback
LEVEL III	Television - telephone conference with open telephone connections
LEVEL IV	Television teleconference - two-way video conference by satellite or microwave

The three telecommunications elements of teleconference are:

Telephone

Television

Computer

For more information contact:

Henry R. McCarty, Director
Instructional Television Services
San Diego County Office of Education
6401 Linda Vista Road
San Diego CA 92111

Telephone No.: (619) 292-3552

Henry R. McCarty
10/15/81